

To the Education Committee:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to write in support of SB 1000 and the concept of establishing a pathway for gifted and highly talented young men and women to move forward to college if and when they are prepared and willing to do so at an earlier age. Many academically talented students are more than capable of completing high school in three years and beginning their college-level studies after finishing junior year. Provided with the permission and means to do so, I believe a good number of these gifted and talented Connecticut students will leap at the opportunity.

As an educational consultant working directly with many high achieving young people over many years, students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with many different interests and talents, I am well aware of the challenges such students face when considering their high school years and transition to college. Some will become easily bored, or will feel that their senior year of high school is a waste of time. They know what lies ahead and are eager to move on to the challenge and independence of college life. Additionally I serve on the Board of Directors of the National Society for the Gifted and Talented, which operates the Summer Institute for the Gifted programs. Through visiting and working with students attending these enrichment programs, I have seen the power of providing gifted youth with stimulating academic and social experiences and bringing them together outside of their home school environments. Many such precocious children long for the chance to find more challenges and reach for higher levels of learning.

Another challenge facing all high school students considering college today is cost. Providing high achieving students with merit scholarships will encourage them to stay in school and aim for a college degree. If they are then able to graduate college with little to no debt, they will then be more able to consider advanced degree opportunities, whether in engineering, law, medicine, or other fields. Scholarship support for students attending Connecticut public (and possibly private) colleges and universities will further incentivize students to remain in-state for their college years. This will likely lead them to remain in-state for graduate school and career, lessening the potential talent drain of our top students to out-of-state institutions and employers.

There will be challenges associated with implementing this legislation, to be sure. These will likely include: identifying the appropriate assessments, and qualifying levels on them, to identify "giftedness" or high achievement; agreeing on areas of talent or giftedness, whether solely in traditional core academic areas such as math, reading, and writing, or also including such talents as music or visual arts; ensuring adequate identification and recruitment of students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, students whose first language is not English, first-generation college-bound students, and so on; and coordinating among school districts what will be considered equivalent preparation through junior year to earn the high school diploma without a senior year program.

Many highly selective colleges have offered a path for Early Admission for many years. This allows highly talented high school juniors to apply for entrance after 11th grade, rather than after 12th. It is the rare student who is ready to apply to these schools at this time, and who is able to gain admission alongside the senior cohort. However, these students do exist, and often jump at the chance to try for this path when it is appropriate and when it is presented to them. Most do

not know this option exists. Were Connecticut to provide such an opportunity within the public higher education system, with scholarship assistance included, the state would likely attract some very high potential applicants, and take on a national leadership role in improving college attendance and completion rates.

Thank you for this chance to share my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Matthew Greene

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